

**SAN DIEGO COUNTY
VETERANS ADVISORY COUNCIL MINUTES**

Saturday, June 14, 2014, 9:30 a.m.
San Diego County Veterans Service Office
5560 Overland Ave. Ste. 310, San Diego, CA 92123

Meeting held at the Veterans Museum and Memorial Center in Balboa Park (VMMC)

MEMBERS PRESENT

Terry Jensen; Ben Dillingham III; Nancy Owen; Michael Robledo; Mary Beth Newton; John Weaver; Will Rodriguez

MEMBERS ABSENT

Justin Singer (E); Laurie Martell (E)

OTHERS PRESENT

Steve Arends, One VA Co-chair; Kent Smith, PVA; Jason Moore, Congressman Juan Vargas' office; Tim Caudill, Congressman Scott Peters' office; Tim Hanna, Congressman Scott Peters' office; Tom Garcia, Assembly member Rocky Chavez' office; General Bob Cardenas

1. Call to Order

Mary Beth Newton Chair, called the VAC meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Introductions/Public Input (3 minutes)

4. Approval of Minutes

Motion was made and seconded to approve prior meeting minutes.

5. Chairman's Remarks

Mary Beth thanked all members present for completing the required Ethics Training.

6. Committee Reports (Limited 5 minutes)

Legislative:

Tom Garcia spoke about AB-2201, "Selective Service Bill"; all men are required to sign up for selective service when they turn 18 or when they renew their driver's license. If not signed up, it may affect government employment opportunities or some benefits like school grants. The bill passed Assembly and is now at the Senate.

Jason Moore, Juan Vargas' office provided information on a recent Committee meeting. Topics discussed:

- The Iran nuclear program. They are working on a temporary (6 month to 1 year agreement) to allow foreign inspections to continue at Iranian nuclear facilities.
- The Veterans Expanded Care Act of 2014 will be released this week. This is a companion bill to Senator Bernie Sanders' Dental Reform Bill.

Steve Arends invited everyone to the 3rd Legislative Forum hosted by UVC, right after the VAC

meeting in the same room.

Kent Smith spoke about the VA Healthcare system and the audit being conducted this week at the Escondido Clinic and the challenges he has had to receiving proper treatment in this facility. There was open discussion regarding the Escondido Clinic being a contracted clinic and not directly operated by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

One VA

Steve stated that the next One VA meeting will be the 18th of June at the VA Regional office 4th floor training room. Steve invited a member of the VAC to attend regularly. He states this is a really good forum to address issues with all three Directors, the Director of the VA Healthcare System, the VA Regional Office and the Miramar and Fort Rosecrans National Cemeteries.

Topic discussed:

- VA healthcare.

Mike Robledo also attended the One VA meeting and he was impressed with the turnout and the level of people there. Topics discussed:

- Rosecrans and Miramar cemetery.
- Audits for the alleged secret appointment list at VA clinics.
- The VA outdated computer system.
- VA electronic waitlist. It is a short list and they try to get you in earlier if an appointment becomes available.

Steve Arends mentioned that he thinks the San Diego appointment system is great. Once the appointment is made, confirmation is made a couple of days before by phone to reduce the no shows.

Chula Vista Veterans Home (CVVH)

Nancy Owen provided updates from their last meeting:

- Jim Miller, director of skilled nursing at the Chula Vista Veterans Home (CVVH) is currently acting administrator. He stated that interviews and tours will be given to prospective administrators in the coming weeks.
- New Public Affairs Officer, Robert Winkler, has been hired and will start June 16. Teri Fukushima is the new Volunteer Coordinator.
- The CVVH census is currently 305.
- If you make purchases through Amazon and use the code "smileamazon.com" the Chula Vista Veterans Home Support Foundation (CVVHSF) receives 1% of the purchase price.

Nancy also mentioned a couple of projects being worked at the CVVH:

- The rose garden sunshades.
- Recliner chairs specialized for non-ambulatory patients are needed.
- Steve Arends spoke about how the CVVHSF raises funds to pay for these items the state cannot buy. Other veterans' homes are trying to do what the CVVH Support Foundation is doing. Nancy mentioned CVVH Support Foundation is probably the model for the other veterans' homes.

Tom Garcia will be visiting the Chula Vista and Yountville veterans homes in September.

United Veterans Council (UVC)

Mary Beth Newton attended the meeting and passed a copy of their Legislative Report to attach to the minutes. (Attachment A)

Veterans Day Parade

No report.

County Veterans Service Office (CVSO)

Tom Splitgerber is out at a NACVSO conference. No report.

Community Reports

Ben Dillingham recognized the Marine Corps and Royal Marines.

Will Rodriguez spoke about the importance of everyone sharing their own experience with the VA Healthcare system to make everyone aware of the need to advocate for veterans.

Terry Jensen spoke about an email circulating that states the Department of Homeland Security staff showed up at the Regional Office in Mission Valley in vans and were harassing veterans. Terry stated this is false and has been investigated locally by other organizations and verified it did not happen. Terry asks if you get this email respond that it is false information.

Jason Moore, Juan Vargas' representative, spoke about the Military Transition Support Program started in San Diego. This is to help veterans transition out of the military into civilian life. There is an operations committee and a pilot program is starting in the fall with approximately 200 veterans being monitored through the process.

Steve Arends reported that the Conference Committee approved an extra \$3 million for CVSO's statewide

Unfinished Business

Veterans Hiring Policy:

A results report was mailed to the County Board of Supervisors in May. Next step is to wait for feedback.

Ex-Officio vacancy position follow-up:

Letter was drafted and sent out on March 18, 2014 to Admiral Lorge requesting support to fill the VAC vacancy. No response received yet.

8. New Business

Statement of Incompatible Activities related to County Duties.

Elections for Chair, Co-chair and Secretary

Terry Jensen conducted the elections and opened the floor for new nominations. Ben moved for the nominations to be closed, all yays, no nays.

In the last meeting Mary Beth Newton was nominated as Chair and Michael Robledo was nominated as Co-Chair, no nominations for Secretary.

Voting passed for Mary Beth Newton to be Chair, all yays, no nays

Voting passed for Michael Robledo to be Co-Chair, all yays, no nays

Terry Jensen nominated Ben Dillingham for Secretary - Ben declined

William Rodriguez volunteered to be Secretary. John Weaver moved to close nominations and it was seconded.

Voting passed for William Rodriguez to be Secretary, all yays, no nays

9. Closing Remarks

No closing remarks

10. Meeting Adjourned: The meeting was adjourned at 10:45 a.m.

UNITED VETERANS COUNCIL OF SAN DIEGO COUNTY MAY 23, 2014CURRENT U.S. SENATE & HOUSE LEGISLATION

The Library Of Congress website www.Congress.gov 'homepage' has a prominent tool tab titled "CONGRESS.GOV >" at the right margin of the page, which opens the new official source for federal legislative information, including the 'Current Legislative Activities' of both the House and Senate.

S.1982 Comprehensive Veterans Health and Benefits and Military Retirement Pay Restoration Act of 2014. Amends several federal provisions concerning medical services and other benefits provided to veterans and/or their dependents through the Department of Veterans Affairs. In SVAC, Senate Veterans Affairs Committee.

S.734 Military Surviving Spouses Equity Act. Would repeal the requirement for reduction of survivor annuities under the Survivor Benefit Plan to offset the receipt of survivors' Dependency and Indemnity Compensation. In SASC, Senate Armed Services Committee.

S.234 Retired Pay Restoration Act of 2013. Authorizes the full concurrent receipt of retired military pay and veterans' disability compensation for retirees regardless of disability rating. In SASC.

HR.3521 Department of Veterans Affairs Major Medical Facility Lease Authorization Act of 2013. Authorize 27 VA major medical facility leases requested in fiscal year 2013 and 2014 budget submissions. Passed by House. Pending in Senate.

HR.3507 21st Century Care for Military and Veterans Act. Expand telehealth services to active duty military, their dependents, military retirees and all veterans. In HASC, House Armed Services Committee, at HASC Subcommittee on Military Personnel.

HR.2481 Veterans Economic Opportunity Act of 2013. Establish an Economic Opportunity Administration within VA to better focus on veterans' transition to civilian life. House passed OCT 2013. In SVAC.

HR.2189 To improve the processing of disability claims by the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes 2013. Establish a commission to examine causes of VA disability claims backlog and providing solutions for ending it by 2015. House passed OCT 2013. In SVAC.

HR.813 Putting Veterans Funding First Act of 2013. Expands advance appropriations for certain VA discretionary accounts, to include Veterans Benefits Administration and the National Cemetery Administration, effective date would be fiscal year 2016. Pending in House.

HR.357 GI Bill Tuition Fairness Act of 2013. Allow veterans using the Post 9/11 GI Bill to pay in-state tuition rates at public colleges and universities regardless of a state's residency requirements. House passed FEB 2014. In SVAC.

CURRENT STATE SENATE & ASSEMBLY LEGISLATION

California state legislation status is available at www.leginfo.ca.gov Home page offers a 'BILL INFORMATION' button on the next-to-bottom row, which opens to a page with search tools to find bills by Number or Author or Keyword.

SB 1113. Exemption from property taxation of specified amounts of the assessed value of the home of a disabled veteran or a veteran's spouse under certain qualifying conditions. In Senate Appropriations Committee for Hearing May 23, 2014.